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AUGUST HOLY DAYS

THE EDITOR

AUGUST brings to many people a period of rest and relaxation, a time for an instinctive worship of the elements—the sun and the sea, the rocks and the rivers, worshipped consciously of old by their forefathers. It is not usually a time for striving very earnestly for Christian perfection save perhaps for the religious who choose this month for their annual retreats. People often feel that in the holiday season they can legitimately let go their efforts towards virtue or to overcome their particular habitual faults. They feel, perhaps, if they ever think about it, that they are—always legitimately of course—leaving our Lord and his ideals a little on one side, a holiday from religion as well as from work.

This false sense of the purpose and need of a holiday may even develop a false conscience. For it is in fact an erroneous conception of the rest from work that is usually provided at this season. Rest is in fact an essential part of Christian perfection. Indeed it is the summit of perfection, to be seen not only in the obligatory rest of Sundays and holy days, but also in the 'rest in peace' for which every Christian prays. The summer holidays are holy days indeed. As we have suggested they provide an all too short occasion for re-integrating some of the natural elements in religion which have so largely been suppressed in our conscious worship of God in church. During the work-a-day months we forget that our churches where we pray at least on Sundays have been, or should have been, 'orientated' that the altar of sacrifice should look towards the rising sun, that the stoop at the door was often a living spring of water, that the altar itself is a lump of rock, a kind of mountain on which we worship, that the whole place of our Christian observance is set in 'God's acre' of land, where the acres of cornfields and vineyards are consecrated to the feeding of soul and body.

There is a danger of these elemental things becoming 'merely natural' if we allow the feeling for them to be divorced from our prayer and our striving for perfection. If the idea of perfection is one of labour rather than of love these brief holidays will not be

Christian holy days; they will have little in common with the Epiphany, the Ascension, Corpus Christi, SS. Peter and Paul when the worker has to fit in an early Mass before going off to his job. It would perhaps be more fruitful if the two weeks or so of relaxation in August were to be regarded as holy days of obligation. Not that the Christian should feel compelled to rise early for Mass or devote the greater part of the day to prayer and good works. But he should be brought to feel that his rest is part of his worship of God and that it gives him an opportunity to sit at ease with God as well as with his family and his fellow men; that it also provides him with the opportunity to expand the place of his regular worship to the whole universe and to bring the whole universe back to the foot of the altar where he prays during the rest of the year, the river and the sea to the stoop and font, the sun to the Paschal fire and the East Window, the hills and crags to the sanctuary, the golden fields and green to the acre of God.

It may seem then a little unseasonal to be offering for summer reading an issue of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* largely devoted to religious life and perfection. It has sometimes been said that this journal is designed for the benefit of the monk and the nun rather than for the layman. And this issue may at first glance confirm that opinion. Yet the Editor has not altered the original purpose of the review which was first to provide reading matter concerned with Christian life for the layman who is perforce not so well provided for in this matter as the religious with their regular conferences and retreats. Naturally the religious are also included in the scheme of the review, and for the very reason that they are attempting a special way towards Christian perfection which sets in relief the essential features of Christian living, 'the one thing necessary'. The layman should not ape the religious life, covering himself with scapulars, a breviary tucked under his arm, and pestering his spiritual director with questions about rubrics and with demands for vows and rules of all sorts. But he can derive great profit from an understanding of the ideals of the state of perfection. He can transpose the spirit—not the practices—of the cloister to his own position and circumstances. He can above all learn of the value and purpose of the contemplative life, the meaning of the scene of Magdalen sitting at the feet of our Lord, the height of perfection in repose, the true nature of the

rest which he so longs for but which he so seldom knows how to employ when it comes his way.

For these reasons we make no excuse for giving over many pages of the August issue to matters concerned with the religious life. It may give the layman as well as the religious an opportunity while sunning himself on the beach or picnicking on the hills to turn his mind for a while to the quest of perfection in which he is engaged as much at that moment as when standing at his workbench or his school rostrum. During these holy days he can breathe freely and so set the pulse of his prayer beating normally, he can re-create his understanding and desire for perfection in the midst of his annual period of recreation. August has come in the northern hemisphere to be the Sabbath of the year, hence it is fitting that it should be made holy.

BREATH AND PRAYER IN ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES

AGNES M. F. SELO

AND the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth: and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul' (Gen. 2, 7). Since that moment of creation when God raised Adam above all mere animal life by the communication of his own divine life, breath has helped to build a bridge between two worlds, the seen and the unseen, the world within and the world without. Breath—ruach, animus, spiritus—the life-giving medium, creates unity between body and soul, matter and spirit. It is that breath of God which moves and inspires man: *Spiritus est qui vivificat*. The opening chapters of Genesis are perfectly paralleled and reach perfect fulfilment in the closing chapters of St John's Gospel. When man had been restored to God's friendship through the Passion and Resurrection, God gave him the same sign of union and likeness to himself as he had given to Adam: 'Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them: Peace be to you. . . . As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them: and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost' (John 20, 19-22). Holy Scripture uses the word 'breath', therefore, to signify the principle of supernatural as well as natural life.

That this truth is deeply implanted in the human heart may be inferred from the fact that even in common speech, the process of respiration is so closely connected with the very conception of life that the word 'expiration' connotes extinction of life, and 'inspiration' its elevation to a super-human level. Yet the Western mind with its hatred of abstraction and its tendency to concentrate upon the essentially practical is in danger of entirely overlooking a fact which has been a commonplace of Eastern philosophies for thousands of years. Long before the Fathers of the Desert and the Christians of the East adopted and adapted it to their needs, Indian and Chinese thought had regarded breath as the link between the divine and the human. Here it may be necessary to point out, however obvious it may seem, that in the remarks which follow, there is no identification intended between Christian and non-

Christian modes of thought. Each uses the same words with vastly different meaning. The Biblical (Jewish and Christian) standpoint recognizes breath merely as an analogy, a symbol, or metaphor for spiritual action—the effort of man towards God, the inpouring of grace from God to man. So Mechtild of Magdeburg, striving to express the inexpressible, has recourse to this metaphor: ‘There is always this wordless breathing’, she writes, ‘between God and myself in which I discover and see many miracles and things beyond description’. And St Jane de Chantal defines prayer as ‘a wordless breathing of love in the immediate presence of God’.

In Indian and Chinese thought, on the other hand, ‘breath’ appears to partake of the divinity itself, as one might expect in pantheistic systems. Yet it contains a substantial truth which, as we shall see, the saints of the early Church were quick to seize upon and utilize in the life of Christian asceticism. In these days, modern psychologists are re-discovering the value of these age-long truths and practices and applying them to the disorders of twentieth-century life. So it may not be out of place to make a brief examination of Eastern philosophy before passing on to discuss the matter of breath in our own religious life, for in our restless times there exists more than ever a need for solitude and interior silence to counterbalance our many-sided exterior activities.

Breath regarded as the prayer-medium *par excellence* is a fundamental principle of Indian Yoga philosophy. The very word *yoga* is derived from the verb *yuga*, to yoke, to weld, to unite. According to its teaching, certain physical and mental exercises enable the embodied spirit to become one with the Universal Spirit. For Hindus and Buddhists alike, the art and practice of breathing creates a physical basis for a spiritual action. Life power, *prana*, is more than mere inhaling of oxygen, more than breath. It is the secret power without and within, which creates life and reveals itself most visibly in breath. The Indians regard the secret of spiritual and cosmic consciousness as intimately connected with breath-mastery and maintain that the life-force, ordinarily absorbed in maintaining the heart pump, must be freed for higher activities by methods calculated to still the constant demands of the breath. *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, an ancient Chinese thega text of the year 755 B.C., discusses the connection between Yo art of breathing and the rhythm of the heartbeat during prayer

and meditation. The Chinese character for breath, *hsi*, is composed of the character for 'self' and that of 'heart', intimating that heart and self are at one and in harmony. In this ancient treatise, the 'indestructible breath-body' is developed to become the essential carrier of life and the writer gives practical directions as to its accomplishment.

Before attempting any exercises, care must be taken that everything proceeds in a comfortable and easy manner. Right posture is of greatest importance. 'Sitting upright in a comfortable position, fix the heart at the centre within.' The most important item is to bring heart and breathing into close relationship with each other. Otherwise confused phantasies may arise which make the heart beat strongly. 'Unrhythmical breathing is the result of unrest of heart', says Master Lu Tzu. When breathing is rhythmical, the heart is at rest. The heart, according to the Chinese conception, is the seat of emotional consciousness, which is aroused by the five senses through impressions of the outside world. During the first period of concentration two chief mistakes occur, 'laziness and distraction'. These can be overcome by making breathing rhythmic and inward. The heart must not enter into the breathing completely. The text continues to quote as follows: 'Breathing comes from the heart. When the heart stirs, breath-power develops and breath-power is originally transformed activity of the heart.' Thus quite automatically heartbeat and breath-power learn to correspond to one another.

Having established a harmony between heart and breath, the Indian philosophers pointed out the connection between sound and breath. The ancient Rishis discovered the law of sound-alliance between nature and man. As Nature was to them an objectivation of 'Aum', the primary sound or vibratory word, they held that man was able to obtain control over all natural manifestations and establish contact with the supernatural world by means of certain *mantras* or chants. Phrases from their sacred writings, certain formulas were used to recreate union of body and soul and these formulas by degrees reduced themselves to a repetition of a single name or syllable, such as the holy word 'Aum' itself.

Finally, in order to acquire the knowledge necessary for the true performance of what we might term 'the technique of contemplation', they insist on the absolute need of a right teacher,

Guru. 'When the right man makes use of the wrong means', says an ancient Chinese proverb, 'the wrong means work in the right way.' The object of all their striving, whether it be expressed in the Buddhist term of 'the transient' as being the fundamental truth of religion, or in Taoism contemplation of 'emptiness', was the acquisition of 'the spiritual elixir of life' by which man was enabled to pass from death to life.

These three fundamental requirements: correct breathing, ejaculatory prayer and an experienced guide, are to be found in almost every page of the writings of the Fathers of the Desert and the Eastern Fathers of the first millennium of Christianity as evidenced, for instance, in the *Lausiac History* of Palladius, or the writings of the *Philokalia*. The monks of Egypt, we are told, prayed very frequently but very briefly. Their prayer was short and ejaculatory so that the intense application so necessary in prayer should not vanish or lose its keenness by a slow performance. The favourite prayer of the Egyptian fathers was the opening verse of Psalm 69, '*Deus in adiutorium*', while that of the Russian and Greek fathers was the prayer of Jesus: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me'.

It is particularly in the writings of the *Philokalia* that likenesses to the Indian and Chinese systems are most apparent. I say 'likenesses' advisedly. The Christian fathers never made the mistake of becoming pantheists and the main reason why they insist on breathing technique as a preparation for prayer is in order to collect wandering thoughts and concentrate attention on divine things. 'The first, or rather the greatest and most important thing on which the success of this mental doing depends is the help of divine grace, together with a heartfelt, pure and undistracted calling to our Lord Jesus Christ; and it can in no way be achieved solely by this natural method of descent into the heart by way of breathing, or by seclusion in a quiet and dimly lit place.' (*Philokalia*, p. 195.) There speaks orthodox Christianity. But it is precisely because these natural processes of breathing are, as it were, the ante-chamber to the spiritual life and are so often completely ignored or misunderstood in our Western processes of thought that it may be profitable to study them in order to correct our misapprehensions and ignorance.

'You know, brother, how we breathe', says the holy father Nicephorus. 'We breathe the air in and out. On this is based the

life of the body and on this depends its warmth. So, sitting down in your cell, collect your mind, lead it into the path of the breath along which the air enters in, constrain it to enter the heart together with the inhaled air and keep it there. Keep it there, but do not leave it silent and idle; instead, give it the following prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me' (*Philokalia*, p. 192). The Russian fathers, like the Jewish mystics and Yoga philosophers, claim that the unceasing invocation of the divine Name of itself creates a harmony of body, mind and soul. Professor Jung has pointed out that much of modern psychology is only part of the technique of Yoga and he utters a warning against any attempt to transplant Eastern knowledge and inner disposition into the Western mind and soul. 'Only by standing firmly on our own soil without sacrificing our own nature can we assimilate the spirit of the East and create a bridge towards its understanding', he says. How far the Jesus prayer can be practised in the Western hemisphere is a matter to be decided in each individual case. The practice is quite workable and salutary, but like all aspirations it demands a good deal of conscious effort and discipline. The result is a co-ordination and development very beneficial to both body and soul. Many Saints have their own favourite ejaculations. St Francis of Assisi spent whole nights crying: 'My God and my All'; the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* advocates the simple repetition of the monosyllable 'God'; St Francis Xavier found expression for his love of God in a constantly repeated 'O *beata Trinitas*'. Examples could be multiplied, but it is not this side of the question which concerns us here.

What I am anxious to show is that it is not fantastic or impracticable as a remote preparation for prayer to regulate the act of breathing and so attune the physical and psychical powers of the human body to the spiritual powers of the human soul. There is too great a tendency in Western spirituality to regard the body as an encumbrance which hinders the process of prayer, to call it with St Francis, 'Brother Ass' instead of 'Brother Body', as he did when he reached perfect wisdom. The Incarnation teaches us that when the Word was made flesh, flesh was redeemed by Divinity. We cannot pray without the body. In prayer all the powers of body and soul play their part and the energies of the body, far from being suppressed, have to be controlled, changed and incorporated in the action of the soul. 'I praise thee, O Lord', says St

Mechtild, 'with all my strength, with all my senses, with all my movements.' Our bodies have to become pure vessels, the temple of God's indwelling, for the body too shares in the redemption. It has to be prepared in this life for its final resurrection by becoming whole, healthy. The word 'holy' is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *halig*, which means healthy and whole. It is here that the breathing technique can be used as a means to create or recreate this oneness between body and soul, in order to remove those hindrances which may stand in the way of the true union between the human and divine. At the Preface of the Mass we are exhorted to lift up our hearts: *Sursum corda*. A correct breathing method, rightly taught and applied, actually does lift up the heart by means of the diaphragm and when one is light-hearted one can pray.

My own experience of work among religious communities has taught me that often during the noviciate—and the effects, alas, may be felt for a whole lifetime—a kind of manichæan attitude, arising no doubt from the best of motives, is adopted towards the body. As a result the religious endures all manner of physical pains and mental difficulties which could easily be avoided if traced to their proper cause by an understanding and experienced guide. It is here that the 'right master', the Guru of Indian philosophy, the Abba of the Egyptian desert, the Staretz of the Russian fathers, is an imperative necessity. Symptoms due to unaccustomed stress often appear early in the religious life which might easily result in permanent disabilities if not correctly analysed and remedied, and many a breakdown in middle life could be thus avoided.

Avoidable difficulties can often be traced to wrong posture or forced breathing. These cause headaches, dizziness, backache, cramp in legs, foot troubles and even deformities, while the mental and nervous strain often experienced during noviciate training may create a tension in the inner organs which may give rise, amongst other things, to acute indigestion or even ulceration. Only after the diagnosis of pains and difficulties unconsciously acquired or inherited is it possible to discover what trial is appointed by God; what is the cross, in other words, which has to be accepted in all humility and borne not only with patience but even with joy. God's grace can, of course, transform any and every human imperfection in the twinkling of an eye, but this by no means relieves us of the obligation of striving our utmost to

keep body and soul fit instruments worthy of the Creator.

'Why should we preserve ourselves?' many a religious has asked. The answer is this: A priest or religious whose life is dedicated to suffering mankind seems to react in the manner of a divining rod towards the needs of his fellow human-beings and to attract to himself their physical and mental sufferings. Hence the urgent need for physical and mental reserves. Every religious is responsible to his own religious family and if in a human body any defect in cell or organ weakens the whole physical organism, of how much more vital importance is the health, the wholeness, the 'holiness' of each individual as a cell within the Mystical Body!

From the point of view of a man or woman leading the religious life, physical exercises such as posture, breathing or rhythmic movement might at first seem meaningless, unless their inner significance in connection with religious rites and their ultimate aim of purification and sanctification are pointed out. 'Not only posture and breath-control', says Mgr Davis (*THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, January 1953), 'but also the therapeutic value of rhythmic movement (play and dance) seem to have been well known to the early Christians and to have formed part of the religious rite.' It is for us in the twentieth century to recover this lost tradition of the primitive Church, for as Dom Bede Griffiths (*LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, Vol. VI, Nos. 62-63, Aug./Sept. 1951) has also pointed out, 'rhythmic movement after some time produces a state of recollection and the rhythm of the word (of text and psalm) gradually exerts its influence'.

Before starting breathing exercises, Eastern and Western methods alike lay stress upon the importance of posture as preparation for breath and prayer. Experiences with individuals as well as with groups give ample proof that, in order to pray, to contemplate, without undue disturbance, the right posture has to be found and practised. Countless examples in various religious rites prove that posture, as well as gesture and movements, are intentionally prescribed. All teachers alike agree that posture should never be rigid or taut, that the body should be given a position that allows full freedom for the breathing process within. For the Eastern student of the Art of Breathing (Hatha Yoga), the lotus seat can easily be practised (a posture rarely possible for Western man). This is the ideal posture, as seen in statues of Buddha, for the practice of prayer and meditation, as the spinal

column is straightened up. It leaves the upper part of the body erect, the chest free for the expansion of the lungs, and at the same time allows the three important nerve currents to the left, to the right and to the centre of the spinal chord to rise unhindered. Another reason for the importance of right posture is that, whilst concentrating in prayer and meditation, certain currents develop, which are felt particularly at feet and hands and in the lumbar region. The Yogis, knowing that these currents emanate from the aforementioned three centres in the body, in order to isolate or hinder these emanations, intentionally chose the lotus seat, thus bringing the three centres as near as possible into contact with the solar plexus. The kneeling posture during prayer of the Western Church seems to follow—consciously or unconsciously—a similar aim, namely, to bring these three poles of currents as close together as possible.

It is perhaps not without its significance that the very English and highly individual Richard Rolle seems to have discovered for himself the Buddha-like attitude of prayer as being most suited for contemplation. (And would not many a Carmelite agree?) 'And I have loved for to sit', he writes in *The Form of Perfect Living*, 'for no penance, nor fantasy, nor that I wished men to talk of me, nor for no such thing: but only because I knew that I loved God more, and longer lasted within the comfort of love, than going, or standing, or kneeling. For sitting I am most at rest, and my heart most upward.' And in *The Fire of Love* he even goes so far as to declare that: 'He therefore that as yet is more delighted in God standing than sitting, may know that he is full far from the height of contemplation'.

For attainment of the right posture, it is not sufficient for the spinal column to be erect and flexible. In at least 15 per cent of cases, unfortunately, it is bent inward into the lumbar region and often outwards or backwards in the dorsal region, which can result in all sorts of physical difficulties. In whatever posture a human being is placed, whether lying down, sitting or standing, the whole body is grouped around its static centre, the centre of gravity, situated within the lumbar region of the spinal column.

From here all movements originate; around this centre every movement should circulate. Displacement or shifting of the centre of gravity only too often results in wrong posture, forceful breathing, disturbing the rhythm and harmony of the whole

body. It produces unnecessary strain on lungs and other inner organs, a wastage of muscular and nervous energies, and thus increases already existing physical and mental difficulties. People who have learnt to relax in this centre of gravity can rest or contemplate in any posture. The wrong posture hinders the even flow of breath, distracting and disturbing the quietude of mind essential to prayer and contemplation, whilst the right and easy posture, at first practised consciously and later on automatically, serves to create the right disposition for breath and prayer. Numerous examples in ancient and modern art show the dynamic and controlled power of breath hidden in posture, though we should not mistake inertia in posture for achieved mastery of breath.

As soon as the pupil has achieved the right posture, he can start instructions for prayer and breathing control which includes all phases of breath. An even balance of various phases within the breathing process helps to create rhythmic harmony between body and soul.

First of all we have to learn to empty ourselves. As water cleans the outer man, so the outgoing breath purifies the inner man, heart and mind, from all alien images and thoughts. After exhaling we have to learn to wait in order to be filled (the creative pause), to abandon our individual breath to the divine breath, as a wave abandons itself to the ocean. If the muscles of the abdominal wall are automatically drawn upwards with the outgoing breath, this action helps to lift the diaphragm upwards, emptying the lower lobes of the lungs, thus easing the pressure on the heart and in fact lifting it up. The Russian father, the blessed Nicephorus, describes the human heart as follows: 'It has the shape of an oblong bag which widens upwards and narrows towards the base. It is fastened by its upper extremities, which is opposite the left nipple of the breast, but its lower part, which descends towards the end of the ribs, is free. When shaken, this shaking is called the beating of the heart. Many people think, wrongly, that their heart is where they feel its beating.'

The monk Basil goes even further than this statement of Nicephorus. He says that 'the three powers of the soul: the power of reason or spirit, the power of fervour and the power of desire, are located in various parts of the heart, namely the power of reason in the upper part; the power of fervour in the middle part; the power of desire in the lower part of the heart. Now if breath

is conducted into the lower parts of the heart, the beating of the heart is greatly increased. Any impression filling the heart with agitation must come from the region of passion, causing carnal desires and often a state of delusion.' Therefore the pupil has to learn by degrees to direct the mind towards the upper part of the heart and thus reunite body and spirit in prayer. 'The purified heart is the centre of the rational will.' St Maximus quotes: 'When grace fills all the pastures of the heart, it governs all thoughts and all members'. This brings us back to the Psalmist who prayed (Ps. 50, 12): 'Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels'.

After waiting to be filled, with each intake of breath, with the pulsation of each heartbeat, we have to learn to wait upon the beat of the Holy Spirit to enlighten and elevate it. Anyone who has achieved the mastery of controlled rhythmic breathing can carry breath and prayer into all activities of life.

Here I want to repeat again that the mere imitation of Eastern breathing technique, particularly in connection with the prayer of the heart without individual preparation, cannot achieve the desired result. Ignorant use of breathing technique can produce extreme heat in various parts and organs of the body, creating congestion of the blood, producing sexual lust and images, leading to all sorts of mental delusions. An experienced teacher therefore will use prudent caution, watching appearing symptoms, controlling physical and mental energies until, by degrees, they are transformed. As in the control of posture, this external and conscious preparatory training eventually and quite automatically passes over into an internal, unconsciously performed process, where the even balance of the breathing process creates the right condition for harmony of body and soul, preparing the path to wholeness and holiness.

PERFECTION AND IMPERFECTION

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

IT is a commonplace to say that charity is the fulfilment of the law. Did not St Paul say that charity is 'the bond of perfection'? Charity is to the soul as the soul is to the life of the body, since it is the well-spring of our love of God, which in its expansiveness goes out to all others who claim our love. The love of God cannot stand still if it is not to become retarded and to lose its grip on the spirit. 'In the way of God, he who does not go forward falls backwards.'¹ It is within human power, with the grace of God, to desire a greater love of God. As St Francis of Sales said, 'The disgusted sick man has no appetite for eating, yet has he an appetite to have an appetite; he desires no meat, but he desires to desire it.'² This desire for perfection is the combined action of God's grace and the human will. But the desire itself may easily weaken, or be absent altogether. According to St Bernard, the way of loving God is to love him without measure.³ So that to love God perfectly is something more than to remain in a state of grace; but charity may only be called perfect when it is active, prompt and ardent.

St Paul has disclosed one of the secrets of Christian living in his injunction, 'whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God'. (I Cor. 10, 31.) Actions like eating and drinking can be done without any very explicit conscious motive or religious purpose. Are such actions or any others so done of no moral worth whatsoever? And are they devoid of merit and irrelevant to the pursuit of a perfect charity? These are more weighty questions than they at first appear to be.

St Gregory the Great in his *Pastoral Care* recalls to mind the severe teaching of our Lord when he said, 'Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment.' (Matt. 12, 36.) St Gregory explains that 'a word is idle that has no justification of real necessity, or no intention of pious

¹ St Thomas on Ephesians, c. iv, lect. V.

² *Treatise on the Love of God*, Bk. xii, c. II.

³ *De diligendo Deo*, cap. I.

usefulness'.⁴ These few concise words gave rise to a stream of theological speculation and a more precise determination of Christian tradition. St Thomas Aquinas adopts the thought of St Gregory, and makes his own personal contribution: 'A word is idle that has no intention of a pious will, or the justification of real necessity'.⁵

The way of perfection can only be safely followed by means of a good conscience, which requires the power of careful discrimination between good and evil.

When a child arrives at the age of discretion he begins to discern the difference between right and wrong, though not in all its fullness until he is properly instructed, and has attained to a realization of the implications of life. But many adults remain in a state of arrested development and may lack a sense of values with regard to right and wrong. This may be due to ill-instruction, and ignorance of various kinds, not always devoid of culpability, or to the general process of indoctrination to which we are all submitted in the modern world, and which penetrates even into the privacy of family life through the radio and television.

Reason is a rich endowment given to man by God, enabling him to direct his life to his end in accordance with God's divinely established order. This faculty is like a beam of reflected light derived from God's intellect. 'The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us', says the psalmist (Ps. 4, 7). By the light of reason man is enabled to see what is good, and to be guided in his will in the accomplishment of what is right, because in harmony with the eternal law. But in addition to this reflected light God has looked to the need of wayward man, and given to him further enlightenment by means of the ten commandments and other revelation.⁶ Thus the world has not been left to its own devices to discover unaided what is right and wrong in human behaviour. And none but the feeble-minded and the half-wits can fail to see at a glance the most elementary and basic principles of moral conduct, which are applied as axioms in daily life.

There are many actions which are done as spontaneous movements without the slightest deliberation or thought. Many of these are not under the mastery of the will at all, and we shall not

⁴ St Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*, trans. Henry Davis, S.J. Ancient Christian Writers, vol. XI, p. 133. Pt III of the *Regula*, c. 14.

⁵ In II Sent. d. 40, a. 5, ad 8.

⁶ St Thomas, *Summa*, I-II, 91, 4.

be charged with responsibility with regard to them, unless through negligence or lack of due care they could have been prevented. Thus the driver of a car who exceeds the speed limit and so undeliberately drives dangerously, cannot be judged entirely free from guilt if he knock down a pedestrian crossing the road.

But all calculated wilful action must be either good or bad, i.e. morally right or wrong, for which the person doing it is held answerable before God and in his own conscience. There is no room for an action in between the two, an action that is indifferent and without any moral value. Even actions which are in themselves neutral such as eating and drinking, or taking a walk, are in reality and in the concrete either good or bad according to the purpose for which they are undertaken. They must needs be either in harmony with reason—the standard and gauge of morality—in which case they are good; or they are out-of-harmony, and evil. They will either be in accordance with virtue, and therefore good, or they will be contrary to virtue, and so vicious. There is no medium. The determining factors in deciding the appropriateness or otherwise of any action are the nature of the thing that is done, why it is done, and the circumstances in which it is done. It will appear to reason that to take another's property is wrong. It will likewise be seen as wrong to cultivate another's friendship in order to commit fraud. Both faith and reason indicate that deliberately to think of other things at prayer time, or to talk needlessly in church are wrong. There is a time and place for everything!

The fact of the matter is that good and evil are more opposed to each other than light is to darkness, or sight to blindness. Even one who is not in a state of grace can still perform acts which are morally good and worthy of praise, as for instance an act of mercy in giving an alms, a good act though it is not meritorious without grace. So too the hardened sinner who knowingly perpetrates a crime commits sin and is held blameworthy by God, even though he may have grown insensible and unaware of religion.

Furthermore, all good acts which are performed by one in a state of grace are meritorious for eternal life. Because every act of virtue performed by one in a state of grace is charged with the efficacy of charity which turns every virtue Godwards. And so

the simplest acts in life, when performed with due moderation and with a sense of doing what is right, are not only good but meritorious. And even eating and drinking and the playing of games are brought under the control of the special virtues of temperance and eutrapelia, to secure virtuous moderation in all things in response to right reason.

There is another type of action which goes by the name of 'imperfection', which too often receives a large measure of tolerance, on the plea that an imperfection is not a sin. This may be an easy solution but not a true one. Doubtless there are many human shortcomings and weaknesses which are in no sense wilful, though had they been wilful they would be sinful. A case in point would be involuntary distractions in prayer, not due to negligence or sloth. Similarly some awkwardness of manner hurtful to others, or entering noisily into a church and so disturbing others. Certainly these defects are imperfections but not sins, though we should try to lessen their number by a better awareness and a charitable consideration for others.

But there is still another kind of so-called 'imperfection' which consists in the deliberate omission of a work of counsel. St Thomas does not dwell on this particular moral defect, for the simple reason that he does not recognize a morally defective act which is not sinful. Every deliberate action is either good or bad, and as we have said, there is no such thing in real life as an indifferent act which is neither good nor bad. It is difficult to excuse from sin the deliberate omission without justification of a work, although only of counsel, which the reason has declared to be the best, here and now. When this is due to apathy it is a venial sin.⁷

The omission of an undertaking which is not of precept cannot certainly be in itself wrong. But it does not thereby follow that all such omissions are free from blame. The perfection of charity falls under precept, and imposes an obligation to use the necessary means for its attainment. Nobody, however, unless he is pledged to God in a very special way, is bound at all times, when confronted with alternatives, to take the best or most perfect course. Though to refuse to do what is of counsel for no good reason, merely because it is not an obligation would be 'an idle choice having no justification of pious usefulness or real necessity'.

One of the most touching scenes in the Gospel is that of the

rich young man who, when called upon by our Lord to renounce his worldly possessions and to follow him, went away sad. Although our Lord's words do not contain more than an invitation, the young man does not appear to be entirely free from guilt. (Cf. Matt. 19, 21.) And so it may be with those who reject the religious or priestly vocation, or who without good motive do not answer the voice of conscience urging them in matters of counsel, such as the hearing of Mass on a week-day, or the saying of morning and night prayers, or the more exact keeping of a religious rule.

The intimate relationship of the soul with God as a living person, described by Francis Thompson in *The Hound of Heaven*, cannot be measured simply by the foot-rule of casuistry. St John of the Cross, whilst distinguishing between imperfections and venial sin, clearly teaches that voluntary imperfections may be venial sins, preventing not only the attainment of divine union, but also progress in perfection.⁸ And he adds, giving a comparison, 'it is the same thing if a bird be held by a slender cord or by a stout one; since, even if slender, the bird will be as well held as though it were stout, for so long as it breaks it not and flies not away. It is true that the slender one is easier to break; still, easy though it be, the bird will not fly away if it be not broken.'

What has been written is not intended to create a needless scrupulosity, by making mountains out of mole-hills, or by turning the innocent into guilty. But the warning of Holy Writ cannot be ignored, that the just man shall fall seven times in the day and shall rise up again (Prov. 24, 16). And a sensitive conscience is a gift of God, which like a precision instrument must be followed lest the soul become deaf to divine inspirations.

That which is in itself best may not be so in fact for each individual. Yet without good cause to withstand the dictate of a properly informed conscience in matters of counsel is to repudiate the known will of God, the gravity of which will depend on circumstances and the nature of the case.

⁸ *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, I, ch. xi, 4.

THE OBLIGATION OF RELIGIOUS RULES

FRANCIS MIDDLEWICK, O.P.

IN a series of Rules published by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in 1901, concerning the approval of new institutes with simple vows, it is stated that the constitutions of these institutes are to express that they do not bind under pain of sin. Similarly, an Instruction of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith concerning the foundation of religious Congregations in missionary territories insists that: 'Since these Constitutions are to be observed not out of fear but out of love, they do not of themselves bind under pain of sin . . .' And the 'Statutes to be observed by External Sisters of Monasteries of Nuns' (1931) affirm that nothing in these statutes, apart from what has been drawn from the Code of Canon Law or other laws of the Church, binds under pain of sin, though the Sisters are obliged to accept the penance imposed for infractions of their constitutions.

This matter of the obligation of religious rules has not always been as clear as these statements now make it. The early religious rules said nothing about their mode of obligation, probably because they were nothing other than a handing down of the counsels of the Desert Fathers. Their scope was rather to propose a form of monastic life than to impose an obligation, and they certainly do not have a juridical character as do later religious rules. They were more of the nature of private documents, needing no ecclesiastical authority for their compilation, nor any subsequent approval. From this it would seem that these rules did not bind under pain of sin.

At the end of the eleventh century, however, there arose a new concept of the obligatory force of religious rules. The rise of the Cistercian Order gave birth to prolonged discussions as to the obligation of observing the Rule of St Benedict to the letter and questioning the licitness of any mitigations. In 1140, in replying to questions proposed by certain monks, St Bernard decided that St Benedict's Rule bound those who professed it under pain of sin, though not always grave sin. This was the beginning of a controversy which spread rapidly. After the Fourth Lateran Council, when it appeared that religious rules were no longer

considered as private and personal documents, but required the approval of the Holy See, it is no wonder that there were enquiries as to the extent of their binding force.

There were those who held that all the prescriptions in the Rule of St Benedict were formal precepts by reason of the opening words: 'Hearken, O my son, to the *precepts* of thy Master', or because of the vows. Others maintained that the words which follow: 'and willingly receive and faithfully fulfil the admonition of thy loving Father', determine the sense of the word 'precept', and that the religious vow was nothing other than stability, etc. From his teaching in II-II q. 186, a. 9, ad 1, it would seem clear that St Thomas held transgressions of a rule in those things which do not fall immediately under the vows to involve venial sin, unless the rule itself provided otherwise. Such transgressions of the rule, he says, 'bind only under pain of venial sin because they are dispositions to the principal vows; and venial sin is a disposition to mortal sin inasmuch as it opposes those things which dispose one to observe the main precepts of Christ's law, which are the precepts of charity'. If the rule or constitutions state that any transgressions or omissions do not involve sin, then there is neither mortal nor venial sin, but simply the obligation to perform the penance imposed for the transgression, precisely because the religious 'are bound to observe such things in this way'. Nevertheless, he allows that even in this case a religious may sin, either mortally or venially, 'by reason of negligence, evil desire or contempt'.

There were similar arguments about the Rule of St Augustine, which begins with the words: 'The following things we command you, who live in the monastery, to observe . . .' and the sons of St Francis disputed keenly for more than a hundred years over the binding force of their rule, until, in 1312, Clement V declared the rule of St Francis to have the force of a precept wherever their were to be found in it preceptive words or their equivalent, and in conformity with this interpretation, the Minister General made a list of precepts contained in the rule—twenty-seven precepts, binding under pain of mortal sin!

By this time the Dominicans had, in their Chapter of 1236, introduced into their constitutions a clause that 'our constitutions do not oblige us under pain of sin but simply to punishment, unless a precept or contempt is involved'.

After this the controversy continued both as to the number of precepts in various rules, and as to whether or not those prescriptions which were not precepts obliged under venial sin. But gradually all religious Orders and Congregations solved this difficulty in the same way as the Order of Preachers had done, so that there now remains only one Order, that of Mount Carmel, which has declared its constitutions to bind under penalty, but its rule under venial sin. The Trappists have given no official declaration, but tend to the severer side in accordance with the tradition started by St Bernard.

For the most part, therefore, the rules and constitutions of religious Orders and Congregations do not oblige under pain of sin, but only to the acceptance of the penance imposed for transgressions. Yet it does not follow from this that religious are altogether free to observe them or not. On the contrary, transgressions of the constitutions frequently involve sin, not precisely in themselves, but as St Thomas says, because the transgression is often a result of negligence or disordered desire. In various ecclesiastical documents it is clearly stated that the proper and immediate matter of the vow of obedience is the formal precept only. It is the purpose of this article to discuss how far the observance of the rule and constitutions fall under the *vow*, and this, not from a legal or canonical point of view—whether religious rules are true laws or not—but by discussing some of the points St Thomas puts forward in his question ‘On the Religious State’ (II-II, 186).

In this question St Thomas repeatedly says that ‘the religious state is a kind of practice (*exercitium*) and training (*disciplina*) by which one arrives at the perfection of charity’ (a. 3 corp.; a. 1 ad 4; a. 2 corp.). The end and purpose of the religious state is the perfection of charity (a. 3 corp.), and so the religious life can be compared to a school because ‘one who enters religion does not profess to be perfect, but professes to apply himself to the attainment of perfection; in the same way as a person entering the schools does not profess to have knowledge but to study in order to acquire knowledge’ (a. 2 ad 1). In this St Thomas follows a true monastic tradition. St Benedict says in the Prologue of his Rule: ‘We have therefore to establish a *school* of the Lord’s service.’ Religious, therefore, are those ‘who make profession of *learning* to obtain perfection’ (a. 3 ad 5) ‘by means of certain practices

whereby the obstacles to perfect charity are removed' (a. 1 ad 4). This discipline or training which religious profess is nothing other than a body of instructions and practices which are ordered to the production of habits. The purpose of any training is to produce habits, intellectual, moral or physical. The 'school of the Lord's service', the religious life, produces moral habits, that is, virtues, and physical habits (such as silence, for example) which dispose to the virtuous life. 'By performing actions we contract certain habits . . . and so those who have not attained to perfection, acquire perfection by obeying' (a. 4 ad 2).

It is by his vow of obedience that the religious enters the 'school' and embarks on the training that is able to lead him to the perfection of charity. It is noteworthy that he promises obedience in accordance with the constitutions of his Order. Here we have a specification and determination of obedience: it is obedience according to *these* constitutions. 'The vow of obedience includes the other vows', says St Thomas, 'for a religious, though bound by vow to observe continence and poverty, yet these also come under obedience, *as well as many other things* besides the keeping of continence and poverty' (a. 8). 'He who professes a rule does not vow to observe all the things contained in the rule, but he *vows the regular life* which consists *essentially* in the three aforesaid things' (a. 9 ad 1). Religious 'are bound by vow to observe those things which are in the rule as precepts, and whatever his superior commands him (by way of precept) according to the tenor of the rule. All other things in the rule which are not precepts, do not fall *directly* under the vow' (Quodl. 1, 20). Apart from formal precepts and continence and poverty there are 'many other things' which fall under the vow. These, however, do not 'essentially' belong to the regular life, nor do they fall 'directly' under the vow. They come under the vow, therefore, but indirectly. How is this? St Thomas gives the reason: 'The vow of profession regards principally the three aforesaid things, namely poverty, continence and obedience; *all other things are directed to these*' (a. 9) because 'they are *dispositions* to the principal vows' (a. 9 ad 1).

The training or discipline which a religious embraces has, therefore, various elements. Yet these diverse elements are related to each other and form an organic whole. First there is the vow of obedience which has for its primary and strictly obligatory matter

formal precepts. Then there are the other two vows which are included in the vow of obedience. And finally there are the ordinary (not formal) precepts of the superior, and general religious observances, which fall indirectly under the vow of obedience and are directed to its exercise. When, for example, a religious is sent to teach in a university, he is obliged by his vow to go there and teach. But to fulfil his office well it is necessary to observe that chapter of the constitutions which regulates the life and office of teachers. It is really, therefore, in virtue of the formal precept that the religious conforms himself to these prescriptions of the constitutions. In this way the whole religious life falls under the vow of obedience, and the religious has the merit of his vow, not only when he acts in virtue of a formal precept, but also when he obeys his superior in ordinary daily precepts and when he observes the constitutions. 'The vow of obedience taken by religious extends to the disposition of a man's whole life, and in this way has a certain universality' (a. 5 ad 1).

Though the religious does not vow to observe all the particular dispositions of the training he has undertaken, he does vow to live according to it: 'he vows the regular life' (a. 9 ad 1). We have seen that the regular life is an organic whole made up of different elements related to each other. It follows, therefore, that no one element can be rejected without the whole being destroyed or changed into some kind of training other than that which the religious has vowed. And so, should a religious deliberately reject any one element, he sins against the regular life which he has professed. For example, if a religious considers that silence is not necessary for him and so quite deliberately rejects this part of the regular life, he sins against the vow of obedience. There is contempt of the rule. On this point St Thomas says: 'The vow of obedience regards chiefly the three things aforesaid, namely poverty, continence and obedience: all other things are directed to these. Consequently the transgression of these three involves a mortal sin, while the transgression of the others does not involve a mortal sin, except by reason of contempt of the rule, since this is *directly contrary to the profession whereby a man vows to live according to the rule*' (a. 9).

It is the purpose of any discipline or training to produce habits. If, by a repetition of acts, a religious forms a habit contrary to any element of the training, he does not sin against the vow of obedi-

ence, because he has not yet rejected any element of the training, which still remains intact. He is, however, in a dangerous state, because such a habit disposes to the total rejection of the regular life. Even less are individual and rare transgressions of the rule against the vow of obedience because one act does not produce a habit, and the habits produced by the regular life are destroyed, not by individual acts, but by contrary habits, produced by the repetition of acts contrary to the regular life. Furthermore, these acts are not venial sins because the organizer of the training, that is, the legislator, has determined that it involves no obligation under pain of sin, but simply to accept the penance imposed.

The wisdom of this legislation is obvious. By making clear that there is no obligation under pain of sin, all occasion of scruples in this matter is removed. The obligation to perform the penance imposed for any infraction of the rule or constitutions has a two-fold value. It must be borne in mind that transgressions of the rule are social faults in the sense that they are against the good of the community, and therefore out of justice to the community punishment is due. By this means order is restored. Secondly, punishment has a psychological value on the part of the person who has broken the rule. It helps him to return to his first fervour and destroys the bad disposition left by the transgression.

This gradation of offences against the regular life is expressed in various religious rules and constitutions. In the constitutions of the Order of Preachers, for example, one offence against the law of silence is considered a lesser fault to which corresponds a light penance such as the recitation of prayers. Whereas it is considered a grave fault to break the silence or commit any other small fault habitually, and in this case a severer penance is enjoined: 'to receive three corrections in chapter and to fast for three days on bread and water'. (Const. O.P. No. 909.)

Every transgression of the rule and constitutions, therefore, produces a disposition contrary to the training involved in the religious state. If these transgressions are repeated bad habits are formed and these dispose to the rejection of the whole training which the religious has embraced by his vow of obedience. The deliberate rejection of any one element involves, as we have seen, the rejection of all. 'An action or transgression proceeds from contempt when a man's will *refuses to submit to the ordinance of the law or rule*, and from this he proceeds to act against the law or rule.

On the other hand, he does not sin from contempt, but from some other cause when he is led to do something against the ordinance of the law or rule through some particular cause such as concupiscence or anger, even though he often repeat the same kind of sin through the same or some other cause. . . . Nevertheless, the frequent repetition of a sin disposes to contempt' (a. 9 ad 3).



DID CHRIST FOUND THE RELIGIOUS STATE?

JOHN MORSON, O.C.R.

IN October 1950, the Holy Father, addressing a Congress of Religious, explained the positions of religious and seculars, especially religious and secular clergy, in the Church. One sentence in the important and far-reaching document is the following: 'It is of divine institution that clergy should be distinct from lay-people. Between these two grades is the state of the religious life, of ecclesiastical origin.' '*Inter duos hos gradus religiosae vitae status intericitur . . . ecclesiastica origine defluens. . . .*' (A.A.S., 1951, p. 27). Many of us then received a first impression that the Pope was reversing a teaching which we had regarded as traditional, and with some the impression seems to have lingered. The purpose of this article is to enquire whether it is true in any sense that Christ founded the religious life and what Pius XII really said in 1950.

Any who have claimed a divine institution have usually relied upon Matthew c. 19. The indissolubility of marriage led up to a counsel of chastity: 'There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. He that can take, let him take it.' (v. 12.) After a few words recalling the offering of little children and the injunction of humility—'The kingdom of heaven is for such'—we read of the rich young man: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast . . . come, follow me.' (v. 21.) Here, very clearly distinguished from precepts, are counsels of poverty and chastity. The words, 'Come, follow me', imply a special obedience not binding upon all believers. Christ asks for stability in the one who thus follows, that having put his hand to the plough he should not look back. (Luke 9, 62.) There are

parallel passages in the other synoptics (Mark 10, 17-31, Luke 18, 8 et seq.).

If in these texts there is described an institution of the religious or monastic life, it is here only in a wide and undetermined sense. Even if a theologian says that, considering human frailty, this following of Christ requires a vow, if he says with St Thomas that the apostles did in fact make the threefold vow (I-II, 88, 4 ad 3), still how the counsels are to be observed, how the followers are to be organized, what is to be their position in the Church which Christ is founding—all this remains to be determined. Since it is not here that Christ gives power to teach or rule, there is no evidence that those who profess the counsels are to be identified with those who receive order or jurisdiction. If the Church is to have a social structure we do not know whether the observer of the counsels will have any recognized status, or whether his observance may remain a matter between himself and God. He is only told that, if he truly leaves all and follows, he may be perfect and may possess everlasting life. We see, then, from the beginning, that two questions are going to arise: (1) Who founded the religious state? (2) Who gave it its juridical position in the constitution of the Church?

If any one sees here Christ's foundation of the religious state, his position will not necessarily require, but yet will be greatly strengthened by, some continuity of observance. If our Lord instituted something which he meant to be found in his Church, we rather expect that it should have been there, not indeed in its fullness but still recognizable in some measure, from the first beginnings. We enquire then what happened and what are the evidences.

Christ's counsel of chastity is found only in the gospel which was written for the Jews. Mark and Luke, writing for the gentiles, did not include it, even though the latter prefixed to his gospel the example of Mary. The counsel could have been dangerous if proposed too hastily and was, in fact, misunderstood by some in the early centuries. Perhaps then a certain discretion delayed its promulgation, for St Paul writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 7; 7, 25 et seq.), seems to give it not as the Lord's but as his own, and that with some precaution and even hesitation. It is not until the later stages of the Apocalypse that we hear it given with a divine sanction (although the text has had other interpretations): 'These

are they who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb.' (Apoc. 14, 4.) But the words suggest that many have in fact observed the counsel. For a long time after this the increasing evidence is nearly always associated with the female sex. After the turn of the century St Ignatius refers to virgins as to a recognized class (*Ad Smyrn.* 13), and a few years later St Polycarp even mentions them with priests and deacons (*Ad Philipp.* 3). St Justin by the middle of the second century only says that he knows many who have remained pure until old age, of both sexes and from every race of men. (*Apol.* 1, 15; cf. Athenag., *Legatio pro Christianis*, 33.) About the year 208 Tertullian writes an entire treatise *De Virginibus Velandis*, most valuable as an appeal to the tradition and authority of the Church, but having as its chief aim the veiling of virgins from the public view. Defending this from the custom of the apostolic churches, he quotes St Paul's words to the Corinthians and says that the veiling is now the practice of the church of Corinth. The virgins are clearly recognized as a class, to be subjected to a special discipline. In a later work *De Exhortatione Castitatis* he refers to both sexes a phrase which suggests a vow and even a public profession: 'See the Church's ranks filled with men and women known for continence, men and women who have chosen marriage with God.' (c. 13, cf. *De Resurrectione Carnis*, c. 61.) Together with Tertullian, St Cyprian adds the witness of North Africa to that of Rome and Asia Minor. About 250 he writes the *De Habitu Virginum*, the most magnificent indictment ever written of such unnatural adornments as face-painting. Clearly the bishop is addressing a class of women over whom he has a special jurisdiction. Appealing to St Matthew's nineteenth chapter he says that they have dedicated themselves to Christ and vowed themselves to God. Not until later shall we find the liturgical formulae which testify to the public consecration of virgins. Our next witness would be St Athanasius; but to quote him is superfluous, for we know that, when he was writing, the monastic life both of hermits and cenobites was well established and recognized.

So much evidence is there of the observance of one counsel. Of poverty and a common life it is neither so clear nor so continuous. Twice at the beginning of the Acts we hear of the first convert community spontaneously imitating the apostles and renouncing private possessions to live a common life. (2, 43-47; 4, 34 et seq.)

There can hardly have been a strict obligation upon each convert to do this. According to St Peter's words (5, 4) the sin of Ananias and Sapphira consisted precisely in lying to God: they were like present-day religious making solemn profession but keeping something back. Probably converts in other places did not undertake the same life and the circle at Jerusalem became a more and more select one, identified with those 'saints' whom St Paul commended as entitled to the alms of the distant churches. (1 Cor. 16, 1; 2 Cor. 8, 4; 9, 1. cf. Acts 11, 29; 24, 17.) Traditions were very firmly established in Palestine, so we may seriously ask whether such a semi-monastic life continued indefinitely, surviving the two destructions of Jerusalem. What we do know is that St Jerome in the fifth century almost borrowed the language of St Paul in speaking of a community of 'saints' at Jerusalem. Alms were sent there and this was defended on St Paul's authority. (*Adv. Vigilantium*, c. 13.) Another writer well steeped in the traditions of Palestine was Cassian. In several places he speaks of a monastic life which originated from the apostles' preaching and then continued. (*Inst.*, Praef., lib. 2; *Coll.* 18.) He is one with St Jerome in saying that there always was a cenobitic life, but the eremitical came later. Neither writer is borrowing from the other, for St Jerome makes St Hilarion the founder of the eremitical life, Cassian attributes the new departure to Saints Paul and Anthony in Egypt. Not only in Palestine but in Egypt also, Cassian says, there were monks from the time of the apostles. This makes us think of the 'Therapeuts' of the first century described by Philo (*De Vita Contemplativa*). Modern scholars frown upon all such notions, but the authority of the Church historian Eusebius cannot be lightly dismissed (*Hist. Eccl.* lib. 2, c. 17). I have discussed the arguments for and against the Christianity of the Therapeuts in *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* (March, 1946). Such are the indications of that continuous observance of the counsels which we might expect to see from the beginning of the Church onwards, if Christ did indeed found the religious life. Some of the testimonies, the latter class especially, do not give us certainty or make history.

The reader may now be looking for an abundance of texts from the Fathers asserting the divine institution. He must be disappointed, for the texts are not there. In fact the idea seems to be one of those which are taken for granted, at most implied, rarely

if ever stated clearly. Anyone may take Fathers who are most representative—Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory—look for what they have to say about the monastic life and its origin, especially see all their references to the pertinent texts in St Matthew's nineteenth chapter, and he will be surprised to find how little can be quoted. I do not believe that my incompetence is the only explanation of my failure in this direction. Suarez, who had more time to spare, in asserting the divine institution (*De Religione*, tr. 9, lib. 3, c. 2, n. 3) gave references to eight Fathers of the Church. Look them up, and I think you may agree that he managed no better. We find a few texts like St Augustine's letter to a certain Hilary (n. 157). The doctor expounds Christian poverty at great length, referring to Matthew 19, and eventually says that he has embraced this, so that he seems to have the monastic life in mind. The most explicit is the last of the Fathers, St Bernard. In his *Apologia* to William of St Thierry (c. 10) he speaks thus of the monastic order in general: 'Our Order, that Order which was first in the Church, whence indeed the Church took its very beginning.' He means that the apostles, by embracing their Master's counsels, became the first monks.

In the scholastic period what had hitherto been assumed was being analysed and expressed. Several passages of St Thomas bear upon our question and it is strange that modern theologians usually refer the reader to those which are least helpful. Besides one noted already two deserve special mention. In I-II, 108, 4 c. & ad 1, the religious life is called a state of perfection based on the three evangelical counsels and is then connected with the two texts of Matthew 19. Best of all is chapter 130 of *Contra Gentiles*, book 3. The Angelic Doctor explains carefully and at some length that the three counsels are of divine origin and that religious are those who embrace the state of perfection by following the counsels. (Cf. I-II, 88, 4, ad 3; II-II 184 & 186, 3 ad 4; 4 ad 1.)

From the sixteenth century onwards the religious life was one of those things which had to be defended by developed argument against the attacks of Protestants. St Robert Bellarmine (*Controv.* lib. 2, *De Monachis*, c. 5) did no more than refute the contention that monachism was introduced in the fourth century and trace it back to the solitaries of the Old Law and especially St John the Baptist. But Suarez insisted that the religious life was instituted as to its substance by Christ, in that he proposed the counsels of

poverty, chastity and obedience. Suarez is generally followed and quoted by later theologians. 'So think all right-minded Catholics', he says.

Finally we must ask what Pius XII said in 1950. For a moment we turn to his predecessors in the magisterium. The Council of Constance condemned the Wycliffite proposition: 'All religious orders without exception have been introduced by the devil.' (*Denz.-Bannw.*, n. 625.) This is a useful safeguard but still negative. Within our own memory Pius XI gave his first broadcast message from the Vatican on 12th February, 1931, and addressed religious as those who obeyed the counsels of Christ. (*A.A.S.*, 1931, p. 67.) He had already written an Apostolic Letter to superiors-general on 19th March, 1924, *Unigenitus Dei Filius* (*A.A.S.*, 1924, pp. 133 ss.). Here he taught clearly that to the precepts Christ added the counsels for a closer imitation of himself, that men and women had always followed these and so formed the various Orders approved by the Church. After this we should have been very surprised if a Pope had told us that Christ in no sense instituted the religious state. But we might have suspected already that there was a sense in which the state could be called of ecclesiastical origin.

By the end of 1950 Pius XII had already traced the dedication of virginity to the very first days of the Church in the *Sponsa Christi*, richly documented from Scripture and the apostolic fathers onwards. Then came the Allocution to the Congress. It has put an end to certain discussions by insisting that there is in the Church a *status perfectionis*—or *status perfectionis acquirendae*—that this is entered by acceptance of the evangelical counsels and that clergy as such are not bound to this by divine law. The very phrases *evangelica consilia* and *status perfectionis evangelicae* leave no doubt that the state finds its origin in the gospel. Yet at the beginning we have read the phrase *religiosae vitae status . . . ecclesiastica origine defluens*. Now, if there were serious doubt about the Pope's meaning, it would be presumption in the private student to interpret. However, to the careful reader the meaning is perfectly clear and he can speak with all the greater ease who finds himself saying the same as the best canonists in our universities. What is said to be *ecclesiastica origine defluens*? Not the *vita religiosa*, nor even the *status religiosus*, but the *religiosae vitae status*. The whole context suggests that a possible translation is as

follows: 'Between these two ranks' (of clergy and laity) 'the religious life finds a status which it owes to the Church.'¹ Indeed the contrast is with the special status given to the clergy not by ecclesiastical but by divine institution. Nor is this anything else but common teaching. The significance of two quotations which follow is that they were made before the Allocution, not by canonists who had to contrive to conform their teaching to it after it had been made. Fr Joseph Creusen, S.J., said in his typescript composed for students at the Gregorian University: 'The Church takes up the practice of the counsels (founded by divine right), defines the practice more exactly to give it public recognition, and so (in the juridical sense) founds the religious state.' Fr Vermeersch had written very similarly long before in his tract *De Religiosis*: 'The founder of the religious state, in regard to what belongs to its very nature, is Christ our Lord. . . . He has given the Church power and office to set this religious state in order.' (*Theol. Mor.* tom. III, ed. 1923, p. 90.)

To say more would be to labour the point. But if anyone were still in doubt he might be sent to the introductory pages of the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater* of 2nd February, 1947 (*A.A.S.*, 1947, pp. 114 ss.). He would read phrases similar to those of our Allocution, but in an elaborate context which would explain them very clearly. If I were to quote and comment I should enlarge the scope of this article considerably, but anyone who is anxious to grasp well the Allocution of 1950 may read it with the *Provida Mater* of 1947.

Christ founded the religious state. If anyone likes the scholastic habit of distinguishing, he may say: Christ gave the counsels by observing which men and women have formed the religious orders: Yes. Christ gave religious a determined place in the juridical structure of his Church, as he did to his apostles and their successors: No. Or, if you prefer: I distinguish the second part again: He gave religious this place in his Church by his own direct word: No. He gave jurisdiction to the hierarchy under a Sovereign Pontiff: Yes.

¹ If it were objected that such a translation hardly fitted the second half of the sentence—*qui ecclesiastica origine defluens, ideo est atque ideo valet, quia arcte proprio Ecclesiae fini cohaeret, qui eo spectat, ut homines ad sanctitatem assequendam perducantur*—I would answer that the Latin *status* embraces the different shades of meaning which we give to *status* and *state* in England, and that the former meaning is predominant in the first half of the sentence. To translate the whole satisfactorily would need a skilful paraphrase.

SISTER BLANDINE MERTEN

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

THIS little book¹ makes known for the first time to English readers the holy and hidden life of a German Ursuline nun who died in the odour of sanctity in 1918, at the age of thirty-five.

The story is a beautifully simple one. Sister Blandine was born in the Saar district in 1883, the daughter of a farmer. She became a qualified teacher and taught in a little village school, until at the age of twenty-five she entered the Ursuline Novitiate at Calvarienberg near Ahrweiler in the Rhineland. In 1911, after taking her first vows, she was sent to Saarbrücken to resume teaching. Within a few weeks, however, illness caused her to be moved to lighter work at the convent at Trier. Here she remained, occupied in the school, until her last illness confined her to her room in 1916. She was bedridden for eighteen months, and died on May 18th, 1918. She made her final vows in 1913, but never lived to achieve the five years' seniority which gives to an Ursuline the title of 'Mother'. Her last two working years, and her months in the infirmary, were passed amid the stresses of war-time and the horrors of constant bombing: during the night before her death (as on many nights before) she had besought the infirmarian to go to the shelter and leave her when the air-raids began. Once the convent was hit—it was completely destroyed in 1944—but Sister Blandine never came to any harm and died peacefully when the time came.

It was an uneventful life, by the standards of the world, but it was a life of unswerving pursuit of holiness and devotion to the Will of God. During her lifetime her companions all loved her, and one of her superiors once referred to her as 'a perfect nun' (p. 86). Since her death, she has been more than once compared to St Teresa of Lisieux, and indeed her sanctity has a similar hidden quality. This life, written by an Ursuline, has been compiled from personal reminiscences, statements of many other nuns, and particularly from the extensive spiritual notes of Sister Blandine herself. There is also valuable evidence of her holiness of life already as a young teacher before entering the cloister. Her motto was *Alles ist mir Himmel*, literally 'Everything is heaven to me', but perhaps more freely rendered 'I try to see heaven in everything around me', and the direction of her spirituality was the simple one of complete conformity to the Will of God.

The book contains statements by the late Dr Bares, at one time her spiritual director and subsequently Bishop of Berlin, witnessing to his

¹ *Sister Blandine Merten*. By Mother Hermenegildis Visarius. Eng. tr. by Elisabeth Plettenberg. (The Salesian Press; 8s. 6d. cloth, 5s. 6d. paper.)

opinion of her sanctity and particularly to her intercession which he frequently sought after her death, and Fr A. Merk, S.J., speaks in similar terms in his introduction to the book. A series of documents gives details of cures obtained after invocation of Sister Blandine.

The cause for the beatification of Sister Blandine was opened in 1949, and the third edition of her life (of which this is a translation) was produced in that year. Although the translator dates her note from London, the style of English is not satisfactory, and a certain unctiousness, suitable enough, perhaps, in German, could well have been toned down. The treatment of proper names in translation is always difficult, but 'Miss Merten' does look odd, especially when as a child she is called 'Riechen' (short for Mariechen); and 'P. August Merk' (p. 11), 'the Rev. Dean Lehnem' (p. 40), 'Father Merk' (p. 72), 'the Rev. Prof. Dr Bares' (p. 91), 'Miss Wolter' (p. 28), 'Frau Kaufmann' (p. 120), 'St Paulin' (p. 110), are not consistently English or German. The name Blandine itself is German, while English would more usually follow the Latin form Blandina. These things are small blemishes, but they make reading awkward.

The important thing about this book is its portrayal of a completely humble nun, whose simple ideal of holiness was to 'live for love' in complete dedication to the Will of God attained by consistent self-abnegation. Her self-effacing holiness was so hidden that her life on earth seemed outwardly so ordinary: and perhaps the occasional accounts in this book of trivialities of school or convent life, seemingly unworthy of record, do in fact underline her simple and normal exterior. Sanctity is, after all, made of heroic stuff, and is more than merely 'being good'. There may indeed be many such souls in the convents of the world, but it is always good and encouraging to learn of one more. It will be a glory to the great Ursuline Congregation of Calvarienberg, if this simple story becomes more widely known and Sister Blandine's merits are recognized.

The book may be obtained from the Reverend Mother of the Ursuline Convent, Kettering, Northants: a foundation made from Calvarienberg in 1938, and the only one of that Congregation in England.

REVIEWS

DIRECTOIRE DES PRÊTRES CHARGÉS DE RELIGIEUSES. Edited by A. Plé, O.P. (Les Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars.)

Year by year priests and religious have met to discuss the problems which face religious and those who have the responsibility for religious life. The findings of these meetings have fortunately been made available to all by the publication of the papers that were read and the discussions that followed. This present volume deals very ably with the problems of confessors, chaplains and all who have the spiritual welfare of nuns in their charge. The idea that being a chaplain to a convent is a convenient way of disposing of retired clergy is completely exploded, as also the notion that appointing confessors to nuns is a matter of no importance. What has been said at their conference of 165 priests, all of whom are experienced men, should give grave matter for thought. These priests were not all religious; there were ten Vicars General among their number. They speak with authority and sincerity, having obviously met with complaints from religious who have been treated with anything but consideration. This was no mere fact-finding conference. The questions dealt with are also practical; such questions as the proper preparation of conferences to the sisters and punctuality in the carrying out of the duties of a chaplain, not to mention a little practical advice about not interfering with the internal government of a convent. The duties of a visitator are dealt with; there are definite limitations in the power that can be exercised by these various officials according to the particular status of the religious concerned. Not a few of these facts are unknown to many, but this book will amply supply any defect in these matters for those who take the trouble to read it, and there are not a few who would do well to digest its pages. While it is true that nuns can be very exacting and are not devoid of the failings of human nature, it is equally true that there are priests who do not seem to appreciate their needs, which are very real, nor their own duties, which are very serious. The words of the letter of Mgr Brot, Bishop of Marciana, who presided, are very much to the point. 'Je ne saurais trop louer la qualité des conférences. . . . Je suis persuadé que tous les prêtres, qui, à quel que titre que ce soit, sont chargés de Religieuses, trouveront dans ces magnifiques exposés un Directoire sûr pour l'accomplissement du ministère de choix qui leur a été confié.'

DOMINIC J. SIRE, O.P.

AN IDIOM BOOK OF NEW TESTAMENT GREEK. By the Rev. Professor C. F. D. Moule. (Cambridge University Press; 25s.)

This is a wholly delightful and entrancing book. There may be a

handful of readers of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* who know no Greek; but let not these think that they need not notice this book, for it is entirely concerned with the actual wording and phrasing of the New Testament itself. Those who know no Greek at all could hardly follow the arguments; those who know a little, even a very little, could enjoy it without necessarily grasping all the discussion, for the passages discussed are usually translated in the course of the discussion; but everyone who loves the New Testament should know about the book, and should know that it is a valuable book. Professor Moule, the young Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, has put together what he calls 'an attempt to provide a syntactical companion to the New Testament'; it does not profess to be a complete treatise on the grammar and syntax of New Testament Greek, although the contents-page does read very much like the contents-page of North and Hillard or some such textbook of Greek literary style. Under each heading is an almost random collection of observations of Greek idiom as found in the New Testament; sometimes the collection is very complete, sometimes it is not, but it is always fascinating. It is not a book in which we expect to find every example, nor a book in which we can look up any passage which happens to give us pause. But it is a book to read, rather than merely to consult, and after reading almost any chapter we find that our understanding of many passages has been enriched. Each idiom touched upon is studied with a magnificent scholarship, together with a fine reverence for the opinions of other scholars. All the time there is a kind of light-hearted joy in the pursuit of exact meaning, and an infectious zest in the search; a typical statement comes on page 142 after an elaborate analysis of certain *tourneures*: 'it remains to debate some of the elusive and fascinating anomalies, overlappings, and inter-relationships of these groups of ideas'. The precise meaning of language is always 'elusive and fascinating', and we need a companion who really knows the language to help us in the quest. Professor Moule is indeed such a companion. Sometimes he leaves us still with a question-mark, as on page 21: 'Has [the Aorist Imperative in 2 Cor. 13, 12] any significance in contrast to the Present Imperatives which precede it and the Present Indicative which follows it?' The great value of this question is that he has asked it, that he has called our attention to a possible shade of meaning which we might otherwise have missed, and which in this case is hardly patient of translation into any other language. (Incidentally, is this why *Kyrie eleison* is left in Greek in the liturgy, with the Aorist Imperative giving a sense of urgency to the request, as distinct from the general request of the Present, a distinction that no other language can reproduce?) Sometimes there are most interesting observations on the individual styles of the various New Testament writers, particularly with regard to differences between the Synoptics (for

instance, on the use of the Middle or Active Voice in Mark and Matthew, p. 24). All these things help us to get to know more intimately, and so to love ever more, the Sacred Authors, and this is the ultimate value of the book. There are, of course, many things one would like Professor Moule to have told us about: what does he think about the definite article in John 3, 10 (*the teacher*), or what about St Matthew's use (or misuse?) of the word 'Then'? But we cannot think of grumbling when he has given us such wonderful fare and so much to think about, and moreover always in such an enthusiastic way. It is a book one will often go back to. We need hardly add that the University Press has produced the book with unimpeachable grace and elegance.

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

LE LIVRE DES ANGES. By Erik Peterson. Préface de Jean Daniélou. Translated from the German by Claire Champollion. (Desclée de Brouwer; n.p.)

Erik Peterson is professor of ancient Christian literature at the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology in Rome. Even in French this little book bears the marks of an involved Teutonic style, but the matter is interesting as well as scholarly, and makes a noteworthy addition to the scanty theological literature on angels.

Peterson once again stresses the fact that the liturgy of the Church is an integral part of the worship of God in heaven by the angels and saints; we share in their official mission in the city of God which is praise and worship; and they in turn share in our attempts to honour God by means of the official prayer of the Church. The author demonstrates this by an enlightening analysis of Chs. 4 and 5 of the Apocalypse, of certain passages from the Old Testament and of the *Sanctus* from the liturgy of St Mark. He gives an account of some interesting passages relating to the angels in the writings of the Fathers, and describes the share the angels were thought to have in the sacraments (especially baptism and the Eucharist), in the Divine Office and in prayer in general. In the concluding section on the angels and the mystical life we may read of our constant spiritual need of the angels who 'show us the great possibilities of our own nature, and of a higher and more intense degree of our own spiritual being'.

Père Daniélou's own more general book on the angels (*Les Anges et leur Mission*, 1951), written after the appearance of the present book in the German original, develops similar ideas more fully.

ELISABETH STOPP

THE ROOTS OF THE VINE. Essays in Biblical Theology. By Anton Fridrickson and others. (Dacre Press; 16s.)

THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN. By David Cairns. (S.C.M. Press; 18s.)

The first of these works consists in a series of essays by Swedish scholars on biblical themes. They represent well the work of what has come to be called typological exegesis, which rests on the literal sense, but is sensitive to the continuous and living unity which pervades, in the form of great themes and images, the Scriptures. In the first essay the biblical doctrine of Creation is presented in its relation to the doctrine of the chosen people of Exodus, which is itself related to the Remnant. The tension between these intentions (if the term is allowable) is broken and transcended in Christ the second Adam and, as Servant and Son of Man, the Remnant. The second essay deals in a fascinating manner with the doctrine of the Remnant as illustrating the close connection between God's choice and holiness; one of the other essays, in discussing 'Election', gives a valuable exegesis of the wedding garment of Matthew 22, 11-13. Another valuable essay shows the influence of a New Exodus typology in the thought of St Paul. The book is valuable for the student both as an illustration of a method and because of the stimulating effect of much that it contains.

Professor Cairns is a Presbyterian and his book shows the influence of German theological work which has become characteristic of the Scottish Presbyterian outlook. In the main Professor Cairns follows Brunner's interpretations of the image doctrine and one of the most valuable sections of his book is concerned with a statement of Brunner's position and with the later teaching of Karl Barth on the subject. The usual difficulty arises here, for Professor Cairns, like both Barth and Brunner, is inclined to dismiss the Thomist position regarding the possibility of a natural theology a little too easily, partly because that position is not grasped with complete accuracy when it is regarded as a merely 'two-storey' view, and partly because the problems the Thomist has tried to face with the weapon of analytic reason are in fact answered, not by faith, but by the use of the emotive terminology of 'confrontation' or by an appeal to Existentialist thought.

Taken as a whole, the book is a contribution to historical theology, though one suspects that the author's distrust of what he calls the 'language of divinization' leads him to present St Athanasius—to choose only one example—in too unfavourable a light. More space should have been given to the theories St Irenaeus most clearly presents in *The Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*, and it is curious to find that the important Cappadocian teaching on the doctrine of man is not represented.

IAN HISLOP, O.P.

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND PERSONALITY. By Joseph Nuttin. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

When this book by the Professor of Psychology at Louvain first appeared in French it was rightly welcomed as an attempt to lift psychoanalysis from the level of pathology to that of what one has to describe as the 'normal'. We in England have reason to be grateful to George Lamb for giving us a very smooth translation of the book that will doubtless have as much success as the original.

The first part of Nuttin's work is a straightforward and clear account of Freud's psychoanalytical theories. The author does not, however, confine himself simply to Freud's own writings but also takes account of modifications and discoveries made by followers of Freud such as Karen Henrey, and the American schools. As each key-concept is introduced we are given an assessment of its validity, especially in the light of experimental psychology, which has too long been divorced from depth-psychology.

But it is the second part of the book that is most valuable rather than the first (where the treatment of sublimation, to give one instance, is nothing like so illuminating as Fr Plé's paper in *Dominican Studies*, 1952). This second part is entitled *A Dynamic Theory of Normal Personality*, and in it Nuttin shows how to transfer Freud's ideas from their pathological context into a normal context when they can be still more fruitful. One example of how he does this will suffice: 'According to psychoanalysis, the adult continues to carry in him the longing after the *infantile state* of being "secure" and protected by the warm sphere of motherly care. In our opinion, however, the fact that infantile elements are found to exist in the *adult* longing for security does not justify the explanation that this adult need is a derivation of infantile needs in man. . . . The desire for protection in the *normal* adult is by no means longing for the infantile state; it is the need of the mature personality for "integration" and "nourishing" contact—a need rooted in the very way of being of man.'

An appendix on Adler and a judiciously selected bibliography add to the value of the book.

DONALD NICHOLL

PSYCHIATRY FOR PRIESTS. By Dr H. Dobbelsstein. Translated by Meyrick Booth. (Mercier Press; 6s.)

The Mercier Press are to be congratulated on publishing yet another valuable work on the problems confronting Catholics in the realm of psychology. When Dr Dobbelsstein's work first appeared in Germany during 1952 it was warmly welcomed by Catholics as a useful guide for priests who find themselves dealing with the mentally ill—even

more useful, perhaps, because it enables them to learn when they are, in fact, facing such people. Dr Dobbelstein illustrates the sad results brought about when priests do not recognize the symptoms that call for a psychiatrist.

But the value of *Psychiatry for Priests* does not only lie in its technical accomplishment; for the author's own deep religious convictions prevent us from losing the sense of the sacredness of all the human beings he discusses—no matter how hopeless, idiotic and meaningless their lives may appear in the eyes of the mere technician. The only part of the book which made me feel unhappy is the title. It might give the impression that the book is a priest's short-cut to psychiatry; the original German title did not allow such ambiguity.

D.N.

DAS MÄDCHEN VON ORLÉANS. By Sven Stolpe. Introduction by Ida Friederike Gorus. (Verlag Josef Knecht; n.p.)

Those who know of Sven Stolpe as a leading Swedish novelist and convert to the Faith may be a little surprised at the appearance of a work by him in German on St Joan of Arc. The answer is that he has long been fascinated by the story of St Joan, and that Oswald von Nostitz rightly considered the story he tells worthy of translation from the Swedish.

Rarely do we come across an author with such a combination of qualities for holding the reader's interest as he threads his way through complex questions of historical evidence, psychological theory and the workings of grace. To begin with, Stolpe has the true novelist's capacity for evoking scenes and atmospheres and plunging his reader into them. With his very first words we find ourselves beside him in a drowsy library down the Rhône valley, till almost without knowing it we are back in the same valley during the bloody, cruel, superstitious years of the early fifteenth century. And Domrémy is as familiar to us as an English village. This same power of evocation is again displayed in his description of St Joan's part in the battle of Patay—how in the midst of the slaughter she swung herself from her horse to protect a dying English soldier, holding him in her arms, calling a priest for him, and consoling his last moments. Such deeds, as Stolpe reflects, make up the stuff of history; usually, however, they go unmarked by historians and will remain unmarked until the last judgment.

But Stolpe does not succumb to the temptation so insistent in a person with his imaginative intensity, that of side-stepping critical questions. On the contrary, he wrestles manfully with Cordier's skilful debunking work, *Jeanne d'Arc, sa personnalité, son rôle*, and emerges the victor in St Joan's cause. And in the course of doing so he provides

answers to the perennial questions raised by St Joan's life: why did she continue to dress as a man? When did she disobey the 'voices'? What effect did she really have on the military situation? etc.

It is because he works most carefully over these preliminary questions that Stolpe is so convincing in the last section of his book, which gives a detailed account of her capture, imprisonment, trial and death. Already, before we arrive at this last act, the athletic, impulsive, racy village girl that she was has taken on flesh and blood, so that we find no difficulty in understanding her reactions—not even her denial of the 'voices'. And for a twentieth-century reader there is something uncanny in the resemblances between the techniques of persecution applied to Joan and those now being applied in our own day. If commissars were subscribers to *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* one would recommend them to read this book for their salvation; the same goes for ecclesiastics and Senators.

Finally, Stolpe tells us that he has written a supplementary work to this one, on the crisis within research on St Joan. It would be good to have it in English.

DONALD NICHOLL

THE BASIS OF THE MYSTICISM OF ST THOMAS. By Fr Conrad Pepler, O.P. (Aquinas Paper No. 21. Blackfriars Publications; 2s.)

The impact of Tresmontant's study, *La pensée hébraïque*, upon the mind of Fr Pepler is writ large in this recent Aquinas Paper. And for this we are duly grateful, since Tresmontant has neatly summarized the antithesis to Hebrew thought presented by the conceptual procedure of the Greeks, and has shown how the most vital modern thought is breaking loose from Greek abstractions to enjoy that concrete knowledge of individuals so beloved of the Hebrews. Fr Pepler has applied Tresmontant's findings to the teaching of St Thomas Aquinas to show that St Thomas's mysticism is grounded in the Scriptures, and is thereby closely related to the Hebrew modes which dominate the Scriptures. St Thomas's teaching on this subject has been neglected, he maintains, because 'his successors, instead of following in his footsteps and developing to the full the thomistic principles of mystical union in the Word of God, ignored the virgin soil that he had ploughed and either continued to cultivate the deceptively lush platonic plains or began to dash across the whole land fascinated by the mechanical perfection of their new scholastic tractors'. The villain of the piece is platonic idealism in combat with the Aristotelian realism stated by St Thomas, the latter being 'the best tool for penetrating to the Spirit of the Bible and so tasting of the heights of mysticism more securely'.

But, as Tresmontant points out (p. 33), Aristotle was as Greek as they

make them in his conception of time, which is so opposed to that of the Hebrews. Furthermore, as Fr Pepler himself emphasizes, St John of the Cross—in the neo-platonic tradition—comes much nearer to the poetic, concrete Biblical manner of expression than does St Thomas Aquinas with his Aristotelian realism. Again that sharp sense of the contingent so characteristic of the Hebrew mind has its closest parallel in Duns Scotus rather than St Thomas (whose account of individuation is so clearly derived from Greek theories). I do not raise these queries because I doubt the main lesson of this new Aquinas pamphlet—that Christian mysticism must ever be incarnational and scriptural—but because I can see no future for the side-issues of platonism, aristotelianism, etc. By all means let us read Plato, Aristotle and St Thomas, but let us then forget their alien terminology and express the vision as it is given to *us* by their aid. It is when he does this that Fr Pepler's pamphlet is so rewarding; for it is when he expresses his own vision that he 'speaks to our condition'.

DONALD NICHOLL

WHAT LAW AND LETTER KILL. The Spiritual Teaching of Fr Francis Devas, S.J. Edited by Philip Caraman, S.J. (Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.)

The late Fr Devas was known to thousands of Catholics as a preacher and retreat giver, and they will be grateful to Fr Caraman for having undertaken this work, which is a series of extracts from sermons preached by Fr Devas during the last twenty years of his life. Fr Devas never published any of his sermons, but they were taken down and preserved by some of his admirers, and it is from these that Fr Caraman has taken the extracts which form this book. They are well chosen, and illustrate admirably the spiritual teaching of Fr Devas, a teaching which is characteristic of its author, simple, practical, full of common-sense, and yet profound, showing the depth of his knowledge of the spiritual life. Fr Devas understood people, their problems and their difficulties, and many of the extracts given here show how he can be of great assistance to all who wish to live the full Christian life. The style throughout is direct and accurate, although in extract 38 the language is more imaginative than theological.

F.P.

IRELAND OF THE SAINTS. By D. D. C. Pochin Mould. (Batsford; 21s.)

'This book', says its author, 'is an attempt to write about one of the many Irelands, Ireland of the Saints, an attempt to describe how Christianity came to Ireland, and how it developed there and then came to influence and change the rest of the Christian world.' This attempt, it may be said, has been attended with remarkable success. The many

photographs are excellent, while the text is very clear. The author who is a convert to Catholicism, describes her work as an 'outline sketch': one wishes that all outline sketches were as free from confusion and superficiality as this is.

The chapters dealing with 'Ireland's place in the world' and with 'The impact of Christianity' are particularly noteworthy, the author emphasizing that the civilization of both pre-Christian and Christian Ireland was highly cultivated and fundamentally rural, 'two things which we today, to our loss and confusion, tend to pull apart and regard as opposites'. Christian doctrines came quietly into Ireland—there was no violent opposition from the old religion. The Irish Christians were not called upon to lay down their lives for the love of God, red martyrdom; rather, their love found its expression in what was called white martyrdom, which involved the extreme strictness of Celtic monasticism. But, as Dr Pochin Mould points out, there was nothing repressed or morbid about Celtic sanctity; the whole affair has a freshness and exhilaration about it, like a breeze off the Atlantic on a May morning.

For many readers, however, the interest of this book will be the chapter dealing with the monastic schools which were of such vital importance in the preservation of learning during the barbarian invasions of the rest of Europe. Ireland's own literature was added to it, her 'vision' literature, and her 'voyage' literature with its stories of Brendan the Navigator. The life of St Brendan illustrates the extraordinary attraction that missionary work has always had for the Irish. The monasteries were often situated near the great land and sea routes. Men like Columcille journeying to Scotland and Columbanus journeying to Europe really typify the spirit of Celtic Christianity; that spirit which carries out Christ's command to his apostles, 'Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost'.

R.J.

NOTICES

ST PIUS X has received his tribute from the publishers Desclée de Brouwer in a life told principally in large and beautifully produced photogravures. There are 150 of them together with a short life written by Nello Vian. But it is the photographer Léonard von Matt who deserves great praise not only for his own photos but also for the way in which he has presented those taken back in the last century. The saint stands out even in the pictures of the young man. The only query left in one's mind is how far these original photos have been 'touched up' to make the subject appear saintly. Whatever the truth, the pictures are most moving. (*Pie X, Une Biographie en Images*; 180 francs belg.)

WE ARE glad to see that Desclée have also brought out a fourth edition of Père Bernard's *Le Mystère de Marie*, a work written in the early 1930's but showing a theological vitality and penetration which makes it still appear on a level with the best contemporary work. (84 francs belg.)

AMONG other reprints we specially welcome *Eve and the Gryphon*, by Fr Gerald Vann, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications; 6s. 6d.), which has been of such value to Catholic women living in the world; and *God and the Supernatural*, edited in 1920 by Fr Cuthbert, O.F.M. CAP., who certainly picked winners thirty-four years ago—Fr D'Arcy, Christopher Dawson, Fr Martindale and E. I. Watkin have led the field ever since (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.). It is also good to see that the first title ever to appear from Blackfriars Publications has been reprinted; this was S.M.C.'s spirited account of the newly canonized (1943) though medieval (13th century) princess—*Margaret, Princess of Hungary* (Blackfriars Publications; 6s. 6d.).

Two recent attempts at Catechisms for adults provide an instructive comparison. *Je Crois en Dieu* by Pieper and Raskop (Desclée de Brouwer) does not attempt to argue but simply states the dogmatic truths of the Creed—so objectively and profoundly that the authors seem sublimely indifferent to subjective considerations. *Catéchisme pour aujourd'hui* by Père Maydiou (in the Cerf *Rencontre* series) is much more a confession of faith made with one eye upon the unbeliever; it is edifying and persuasive, yet does not somehow carry the weight of the first work (which has been remarkably successful in the original German). There seems to be a moral in this: something about where one's eyes should be fixed.

EXTRACTS

THE LADY OFFICE has often been criticized as a permanent form of office for laity or religious because of its lack of contact with the liturgical seasons. It is good news that another of the present Holy Father's liturgical reforms is to remedy this defect. A new edition has appeared in Latin and German, with other translations to follow shortly (published by Marietti in Turin), adapted to the liturgical seasons of the year—special lessons for each season, and special antiphons and prayers for the greater feasts. The Holy Father's letter to the Sisters who introduced this version is printed as a foreword.

This recitation of the Marian Office unites (the faithful) closely with the liturgical life of the Church and with the divine office of the priests. Especially now in our days this love of the sacred liturgy, remarkably increased through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has also aroused a stronger desire in many of those who recite these Marian prayers daily that they should be even more closely linked with the Church's ceremonies and feasts than is possible with the form of the Little Office which has been placed in the Roman Breviary since the time of our Predecessor, St Pius V. Therefore with special pleasure We have learned that . . . you cherish the devout wish to have a fuller participation in the liturgical life of the Church, and that you have therefore carefully prepared a rather expanded edition of the Little Office, adapted more closely to the seasons and feasts of the liturgical year. . . . We gladly permit you and other congregations who may so desire to use this new edition of the Lady Office in your daily recitation.

A CATHOLIC DOCTOR, writing in *Integrity* (New York, June issue), describes the professional attitude to the suffering the doctor has to relieve and how it has to be transformed by the faith:

Suffering is never useless—this we know and believe, but we have no proof that it will be equilibrated in this life. Rather we in medicine see examples which, if taken segmentally, seem utterly cruel and unnecessary . . .

What then is the answer? To suffer purposefully, hopefully and gracefully, this is the only way to use this common human experience. We accept, because we must, that suffering will occur as long as life exists. To use suffering and make it pay off, all our human experiences must be related consciously to Christ's Passion. Supreme Love, Omnipotent Justice suffered as man in the most seemingly useless and wasteful fashion on Calvary. The Crucifixion was only horrifying and mysterious until the Resurrection . . .

FR J. J. QUINLAN, writing on Mental Health and Holiness in *Sponsa Regis* (Collegeville, June issue), lists and describes the various mechanisms by which the human personality 'is able to promote and protect its security and integrity'. There are three which are the normal and healthy means by which it 'meets and overcomes the undesirable tendencies, emotions, and desires which confront it', namely conscious control, suppression, and sublimation. These are mechanisms by which personality seeks to grow. There are others by means of which it seeks to protect and defend itself when confronted with danger or pain: rationalization, compensation, reaction formations, projection, identification. 'Each of these mechanisms if properly developed and controlled can be of great benefit and assistance to us as we seek to develop a strong and healthy personality.'

A NEW MOVEMENT has been gathering strength in America over the past few years: it is called 'The Christopher Movement' and its legal title is *The Christophers, Inc.* It was started by Father James Keller of Maryknoll and is a form of Catholic Action without organization but with considerable inspiration from its author. The title of the first of a series of cheap and well-produced books, *You Can Change the World*, might possibly suggest the Buchmanite technique and the English reader may become conscious of a predominance of the stars and stripes. But Fr Keller is no second Fr Coghlin. This is not a political movement.

The Christopher goes into the market-place, in a job of his or her own choosing, without fanfare, or flag waving, without doing anything sensational. His or her simple task is to insist on truth where others are intent on furthering falsehood, to establish order where others are spreading confusion. . . . Nothing remarkable may ever be required beyond a generous spirit of courage and daring. . . . The object of the Christopher movement is to develop a sense of personal responsibility and initiative in bringing back into the market-place the major truths which alone guarantee peace for all mankind.

All this may seem a little vague—simply another call, already so often repeated, to Christians to play their part as Christians in public and social life. But the fact remains that more than a hundred thousand in U.S.A. and Canada have responded to this particular call. Other books in the same series include *All God's Children*, *Careers that Change the World*, *Government is Your Business* (35 cents each).

**SPODE HOUSE, HAWKESYARD PRIORY, RUGELEY,
STAFFS, 1954**

**LIFE OF THE SPIRIT CONFERENCE
'SCIENCE AND SANCTITY'**

Tuesday, September 21st to Friday, September 24th

Tuesday, September 21st:

5.30 **General Introduction**

8.00 **Holiness and the Times**

— FR GABRIEL REIDY, O.F.M.

Wednesday, September 22nd:

10.00 **The Symbol & the Scientist**

4.45 **The Scientist & Our Lord** — E. F. CALDIN

8.00 **Action & Contemplation** — MARK BROCKLEHURST, O.P.

Thursday, September 23rd:

10.00 **The Scientific Conscience** — LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

4.45 **Natural & Supernatural** — CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

8.00 **Practical Applications & Communications**

Friday, September 24th: Departure.

There will be a Dialogue Mass for the Members of the Conference in the Priory Church at 8 a.m.

The subject for this year's conference has developed naturally from the previous conferences which began by considering the general spiritual needs of the day, continued with the special need of the sense of Community and of the Symbol in the Scriptures, and proceeds now to discuss the fundamental spiritual principles in relation to the scientific age in which we live. The majority of the papers read at these conferences have appeared in **THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT**.

The tariff for the conference will be £2, with a booking fee of 5/-. Write to the Warden, Spode House, Rugeley, Staffs (Telephone: Armitage 331), for details of other week-ends and conferences taking place at Spode House.

You Who Can See ! !

The Catholic Blind Ask For Your Help

Liverpool Catholic Blind Asylum, 59a Brunswick Road, Liverpool, and St Vincent's School for the Blind and Partially Sighted, Yew Tree Lane, West Derby, Liverpool, both under the care of the Sisters of Charity, educate blind children, teach young blind trainees a trade and provide a home and care for the elderly blind. The only Catholic Asylum and School in England. Donations and Legacies are urgently requested.

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Broad Green Road, Old Swan, Liverpool, 13

(Under the Care of the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul).

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The Hospice for the Dying was opened with a view to according spiritual and temporal comfort, tender nursing, and loving care to persons whose insufficient means and friendless condition prevent them from being properly cared for in their homes when death draws near.

Subscriptions and contributions in kind will be thankfully acknowledged by Rev. Sister Treasurer.

Remember 'THE HOSPICE' and
PRAY for the SICK and the DYING.

**WE HAVE NOW EXTENDED THE PROPERTY TO
COMPRISE ANOTHER 36 BEDS,**

at a cost of £30,000.